Intelligence Staffs who worked out plans for set offensives in the Allied Headquarters had been taught to believe that no surprises on a great scale were possible on either side in the stabilised West. They had never been able to stage one that misled the Germans. Why then should the Germans be able to deceive them ? This was one of the axioms of Allied strategy fermenting under a brass hat. To doubt it, if you were a civilian, was to be an amateur ; if a soldier, then a crank only safe to fight in trenches, where to think was a breach of discipline.

Surprise was therefore ruled out on the Western Front. Why not attempt a surprise on the Italian Front ? We were assured that nothing of that nature was possible there. The Austrians knew an offensive was coming. They probably did, but they were expecting the same old kind of offensive : *Surprise* a preliminary bombardment in a difficult *kalian Front* country of granite trenches by an utterly inadequate artillery, insufficiently supplied with ammunition. Our Staffs knew that nothing could come of such an attack, except the loss by the enemy of a few kilometres which could be easily recovered by a well-timed and well-gunned counter-attack. Such a conventional offensive had its uses in the general scheme of things as ordered at Ghantilly: it kept a number of Austrian guns in the Trentino or on the Isonzo so that they should not

wander to the Carpathians, or so that the Austrians should not be able to lend their giant guns to the Germans in France.
It never occurred to the rigid minds of the two G.H.Q/s that a kind of attack was possible on the Italian Front which would have taken the Austrians completely unawares and achieved a real break-through and not impossibly a break-up, before the